

Angelique Rockas

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Angelique Rockas South African born Greek actress who singlehandedly founded Internationalis the first company in the UK to perform great European classics with multiracial and multination something unheard of at that time.



Angelique, who has an Honours degree in English Literature and a major in Philosophy from Wits University, Johannesburg, and who was an anti-apartheid activist, studied Acting at Cape Town University. She is multilingual: speaking English, Greek, Afrikaans, French, and pigeon Italian. She has made Peter Hyams, Nicholas Roeg and Costas Ferris in Greece. She works in the UK, Greece, has a Paris and USA agent, and also has a base in Eastern Europe where there is a burgeoning film renaissance.

Angelique, hello from everyone at Hellenism.Net. Thank you for taking the time to answer to our questions!

Hello to everyone at Hellenism .net and especially I salute you Evangelos, whose pride in his Hellenic roots and heritage are so needed at a time when the Hellenes are besieged on many fronts. To quote from Yeats' poem "The Second Coming"

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world"

HELLENISM.NET: Where were you born, and is your real given name "Angelique Rockas"?

I was born in a small quiet suburb of a provincial South African town called Boksburg, in an area reserved for "Whites only"; this meant Caucasian English inhabitants. The people who kept our houses spotlessly clean, and our lawns well tended were black African workers who lived in rooms discreetly tucked away in the back yard, and they had no rights. We were the only Greek family in the vicinity.

Regarding my name. I was baptized after my paternal grandmother in a Greek Orthodox Church with the name of "Angeliki" - simple and meaning heavenly messenger. As a child "Angeliki" became a more affectionate Angelikoula, then Koulitsa, Kouki, Koo - the permutations were

In my matriculation year at school I decided that as a young adult planning to attend University I would resume my more serious baptismal name as the "ge" sound in the English pronunciation in "Angeliki" is rather guttural and harsh, I settled for Angelique, pronounced not with a French sound for the initial "A" vowel, but with the flat English pronunciation of A as in Hat.

HELLENISM.NET: Are both your parents Greek? What part of Greece are they from?

Both my parents, George and Stavroula, now deceased, were born in Greece, in the Peloponnese. My father was born into a very poor family of a beautiful village called Kakouri, officially Artemision, near the town of Tripoli, province of Arcadia. By contrast my mother came from a prominent family from the village of Kalamara, in the Kalamata area, province of Messinia, well known for its Royalist and Junta sympathies. But in earlier times this was Kolokotroni territory. We might even be related to this unruly freedom fighter against Ottoman slavery, as he was connected to either the Matsouka family - both relatives of my mother's family.

HELLENISM.NET: How did your family end up in South Africa?

My father in the 1940's like his other 4 brothers because of economic hardship immigrated to XENITIA South Africa, to try and earn a living as well as at home, just as now once again in 2011 due to Greece's dire economic prospects many young Greeks are immigrating to other parts of Europe for the same purpose.

As was the custom my father returned to Greece to find himself a Greek bride once he was financially independent. My mother, though coming from a family in her own right and with no reason to leave Greece was tempted to marry this gentle Tripolitsioti out of a sense of adventure. Back in Greece however life didn't prove so adventurous. My parents were faced with two serious challenges - our family's first born child, the lovely Basil, was born, but there was no cure, and my father lost most of his money in the gold crash of 1945.

Nonetheless despite all odds -with hard work and persistence my parents, in time, were able to build up a healthy financial portfolio.

HELLENISM.NET: What was life like in South Africa? What did you think about the Apartheid growing up?

Life in South Africa for me and my siblings: Basil my brother, and my two sisters Dimitra and Georgina was privileged, as was the life of the other families. As a child I remember having two nannies, Joanna and Fransina, who indulged me to no end. I was a spoilt and imperious little miss. The comfortable bubble protected us from experiencing the injustices of Apartheid in a concrete way.

It was at my convent school, St Dominic's that I gained understanding of the full force of the evils of institutionalized racism imposed on 73% of the population by a White Power elite, and it was here that developed my thirst for political justice. The nuns had nothing to lose by their radical beliefs, prepared to sacrifice their lives for a non-Marxist, non-violent Christ-centered liberation theology and fight for equality for all. My school years were where my political revolt started.

HELLENISM.NET: Did you ever experience discrimination as the child of immigrants?

Yes, "Bladdy Grieks!" was a common insult thrown at us. In a country where racism was institutionalized by a minority Afrikaner Power, discriminations against Caucasian immigrants of other than protestant Afrikaner stock was rife. The Afrikaners discriminated against the "Rooi Rednecks", a derogatory term for the British who had treated them appallingly in the Colonial past.

And the Afrikaners and the British in turn discriminated against immigrants from Mediterranean countries - Greeks, Cypriot Greeks, Italian because they considered them of lower social stock. Also the financial success of these hard working immigrant communities riled both the Afrikaners just as the financial success of Pakistani and Indian communities grates on many Caucasian citizens of the UK and Canada.

This is not to say that many a Greek and Greek Cypriot in South Africa hadn't acquired their wealth through corruption, just like the tax avoider classes of Greece today, lawyers, politicians, doctors, accountants, as well as the ship-owners and manufacturers, building contractor contributed to our country's downfall. Too shameful to even think about it!

HELLENISM.NET: What are the fondest memories of your childhood?

In South Africa creating houses out of fruit boxes in the sandpit of our home.

Conducting an imaginary orchestra, standing on a stool after seeing a film about the life of classical opera singer.

My father bringing an extremely beautiful pram with a beautiful doll to hospital after I'd had my tonsils removed.

As a little girl my mother used to take me with her to her fittings with her very expensive seamstress. I was dazzled by the beauty of the fabric procedure. I still remember the feel of expensive taffeta.

Listening enthralled to the Greek myths about the great achievements of the Greek heroes and heroines and deciding that I too wanted to be a (

In Greece where I spent 2 years of my childhood - sitting on a hill in Kakouri one afternoon just as the sun was setting and viewing a vista of "euporo" Greek countryside and feeling in my own childlike way 'the presence of something deeper interfused' to use Wordsworth's much used

The smell of "yiasemi" wafting in the air of a balmy Greek summer evening.

The glory of the constellations of stars viewed under the clear evening skies of the Greek countryside.

HELLENISM.NET: What's your relationship with your family? Do you have any siblings? What was like growing up in the Rockas household?

My parents tried their best for us - they sent all four of us to excellent Catholic convent boarding schools, where apart from high academic standards we were exposed to great classical music, ballet, drama and sports where I first felt the thrill of performance as a schoolgirl actress.

As good Orthodox Christians, who said their prayers and made their "metanies" at our "Iconostasio", my parents' main purpose in life was to protect their family and give to Greek charities - fighting apartheid was outside their world.

So my relationship with my parents was ambiguous. Grateful for all their efforts to provide us with top notch education, but always aware of their political views, and their unease about my liberal political beliefs.

I was brought up in the strictest Greek Orthodox traditions possible. I was expected always to behave impeccably and with honour. Philotiri what was indelibly inscribed into my soul was that we were GREEKS, and ours was the greatest and most superior heritage EVER given to womankind.

A Greek teacher, Mrs Stefanou, who had taught at the "Arsakio womens" college in Athens, came to the convent every Saturday to teach us the classics and literature. This love of Greece has manifested itself in my older sister, Dimitra, who excelled summa cum laude in Classical Greek at the University of Witwatersrand, and then doing a Masters on Sophocles' Antigone and finally lecturing at the Open University. Currently she is writing a book on

And I avidly read her text books on Classical Greek thought during school holidays acquainting myself with Socrates and Plato. It wasn't until when I went to University I studied Greek Philosophy - and was moved to my soul with the beauty and depth.

In Romania apparently Plato is revered as a Saint of the Orthodox Church, and I am told that at the entrance of a particular monastery on Mt Athos is a mural of Plato on the one side and Aristotle on the other. So the continuation of Platonic and Aristotelian thought into the Byzantine period and the great theologians of the Orthodox Church like Nanzianus etc. cannot be contested by the rationalists of the enlightenment onwards.

My younger sister Georgina as an artist manifests her love of Greece in the subjects that she chooses to paint - delicate Byzantine motifs. She loves Greece and she will stand up for our beleaguered country to no end. In fact she listens to all the non mainstream news channels about what the

is. It was she who first pointed out to me what the diabolical Henry Kissinger said about Greece in 1994:

"The Greek people are a difficult if not impossible people to tame, and for this reason we must strike deep into their cultural roots. Perhaps to get them to conform. I mean, of course, to strike at their language, their religion, their cultural and historical reserves, so that we can neutralize them, to develop, to distinguish themselves, or to prevail; thereby removing them as an obstacle to our strategically vital plans in the Balkans, the Middle East."

Our current Greek westernized political leaders also seem to desire this too, with Papandreou always citing the Swedish model being an ideal that Greece should aspire to. What on earth is this man doing running Greece?! What does Orthodox Greece have in common with Lutheran Protestant Sweden????

Many of the Greek journalists and TV presenters also seem to share this "progressive intellectualism" which leads Greeks to having to apologise to the Orthodox - What a load of rubbish! Prof Yiannaras with whom I have corresponded then continues with the frightening story about 'the predicted and desirable Latinization of our Greek alphabet' quoted by an anonymous source in a periodical Samizdat. Let's get this straight - both Greek and Balkan countries that have Cyrillic alphabets should fiercely resist Latinization.

To revert back to the reason for my spending 2 years of my childhood in Greece. My parents were so imbued with Greek pride in their heritage that they were afraid that in South Africa we would become Anglicized and forget our Greek values, that we packed our bags and left for Greece where we stayed and these might be described as the loveliest part of my childhood and constitute the roots of my great PHILOPATRIA for Greece.

The university period of my life in South Africa. I arrived at Witwatersrand University politicized, and with a hidden passion for drama and acting, but I was deeply frowned on not only by my deeply traditional parents but also by the conservative immigrant Greek community in which I grew up.

This is the place where the tension between my parents and myself on account of my political beliefs became pronounced.

A photo of me standing at picket line on the WITS side of Jan Smuts avenue during one of the protests appeared in the "Star" newspaper. The local Nationalist Party Boksburg constituency saw it and made an ominous call to my parents "I didn't know that your daughter was communist!" and they came down on them. Of course I wasn't a "communist" but anyone who opposed the regime was automatically labeled as a communist.

I ceased my political studies as I didn't wish to cause my parents any extra anxiety or stress - they had enough on their plate with our Black Consciousness discourse however continued, so that when I met the great South African Greek lawyer George Bizos, born in Mani, Messinia, and one of our great men of the twentieth century and beyond: a friend and staunch ally of Mandela whom he also had to honour to defend, involved in the constitution of the new South Africa, Bizos nicknamed me "l'enfant terrible" precisely because of my continued concern to bring about a change in the status quo - a kind of Socratic gadfly.

Apart from the greatness of Bizos for his role in the dismantling of apartheid, defending Mandela etc, he also manifested a genius in his recruitment of a member of the conservative South African Greek community, by drawing historical parallels between the 400 years of slavery that Greece had suffered under the Ottoman Turks and the 300 years or so of repression and cruelty suffered by the Southern African black tribes and mixed race people under the Nationalist Afrikaner rule. By using this strategy Bizos was able to balance his fight for justice in South Africa, and synchronise it with the conservative Greek community in a more progressive direction.

Back to my studies: after my completing my 4th year Honours degree in English literature at Wits, I finally summoned the courage to persuade my parents to agree to pay for my drama studies at Cape Town University.

By the time I graduated from Cape Town, I had come to the realization that there was no place for me in South Africa as it existed at that time, and I found it difficult to function as an individual in a society that considered 73% of population as inferior, that my Greek community frowned on me but also because my beliefs for a just non-racial society had now incorporated a fight for the equality for women - an anathema to the conservative Greek community in which I had my social being. I didn't want to spend my life apologizing for who and what I was.

HELLENISM.NET: Do you speak Greek?

Though I have inadvertently answered this earlier, I'd like to shame the Greek parents who have neglected to transmit to their children the Greek language.

In our family we only spoke Greek to our parents - not to do so would be disrespectful. What did the great Shelley exclaim when he was overw

beauty of the Greek language!" Oh most excellent of languages" and in contemporary Britain how many thousands of intellectuals and Professors that our great language is the root base of most of the important terms used in intellectual discourse.

I myself have experienced the volcanic existential depths of the Greek language. It was during a performance of Medea by Tzeni Karezi at the theatre in Athens, when she was pleading to the callous Jason to take pity on her and she used the word "splachniasou". "Pity" is too weak a word to express the emotional and psychological depths "splachniasou" expresses. "Splachna" is the part of the body where a woman carries her unborn child - the root of ontological existence. How deep can you get!

Another example of the inexhaustible richness of the Greek language, where the sacred and the taboo/demotic /profane combine and commonly used Greek swear word "gamoto" meaning sexual intercourse /copulation and that is the equivalent of four letter word beginning with

The root of this "gamoto" swear word in Greek however is "gamos" the word for marriage. So marriage - pertaining to a sacred rite and intercourse /copulation - are inextricably linked. So sexual intercourse /copulation is charged with a level of moral seriousness and force that is missing in the non-sacramental, non - ontologically orientated west.

Even that Un PC but very deep philosopher Heidegger, proclaimed that contemporary philosophy can only be understood by digging deep into GREEK ontological and etymological meanings of the root terms used in contemporary discourse.

Furthermore, without New Testament Greek there would be no Christian Theology, or possibly no Christianity. The Athanasian Creed, the dogma of Homiōusios, of the same essence as the Father, the dogma of Christ - fully God and Fully Human, The dogma of the Holy Trinity - 'that Christ is of the indivisible source of the Divine Godhead through the power of the Holy Spirit' could only have been formulated by the Church Fathers using linguistic structures and concepts provided by early century Greek language and thought, e.g concepts such as the God/man - a concept that does not exist in the Hebrew and is totally foreign to Hebrew culture. Hence Shelley's assertion that the Greeks /the Hellenes "gave us our religion".

As for the Greek language in recent world poetry who has surpassed the richness and dazzling imagery of our great poets Kavafy, Elytis and Seferis.

HELLENISM.NET: Do you visit Greece often? Have you done any shows in Greece?

Greece is my real home so of course I go to Greece not to visit but to live as a Greek and participate in the common life. It is the land where I was born and buried.

When my parents were alive I used to fly over to Greece at least 3 times a year to spend time with them. Now that both my parents and Basil have passed, I have paid honour to them by having a Mural Icon of Panagia and the Christ Child painted in the Ikonostasis of my mother's village church, and have contributed to the church chandelier and other items in Agios Constandinos, my father's village. So though buried in South Africa all three loved themselves Greeks.

It is during these months that I spent with my parents and Basil in Greece that I first saw the great films of Angelopoulos and Koundourous; the exhilaration of the beauty of our Greek island landscapes that left Byron breathless and inspired him to write his famous panegyric 'The Isles of Greece' in his epic poem "Childe Harold", and Luc Besson to make his film "The BLUE", as he had spent quite a large part of his childhood times when my mother regaled me during summer siesta with stories from her girlhood in Kalamata during WWII.

As owners of the best house in the village, The Nazis automatically moved in and took over the upper floors of the family home. My mother and beautiful young Greek women were hidden below in the cellars, from where they could hear all the shenanigans taking place during the parties held. It was the only source of entertainment that they had.

My grandmother was a fearless Greek warrior, and very protective of her land. She literally ordered some Nazi soldiers to get off one of her guns at them.

One of my grandmother's cousins was a high ranking aristocrat as well as a great philanderer. At a cabaret one night he caught sight of a beautiful woman and swaying on a table. Thunderstruck he reached out and climbed onto the table himself and they both walked away into the night. They were married and remained married unto death, but he was disowned by his family. In front of Eros respectability flies out of the window.

A very tragic story which also expresses the scars and trauma that still trouble our contemporary Greek consciousness is the beheading of my father and my mother's cousin by the Royalists during the ill-fated Civil War. Post WWII. As I have already mentioned Kalamata was mainly Royalist territory.

what might you ask - for kingly lineage that wasn't even Greek but imported originally from Austria, and imposed on Greece by the Great Power, caught, treated as a traitor and beheaded. His head was then sent in a sack to his mother, whose uncontrollably grief stricken cries could be heard in the village for days on end. This young man had been a very amenable and lovable person and the whole village was dumbstruck with disbelief!

What else have I discovered during my annual stays in Greece?

The more laic side of my Great Orthodox religion. A key moment of my spiritual epiphany was the tale told by the property manager of our apartment in Marina. Every year on All Saints Day if I remember correctly, she commemorated the death of her son who died from an overdose. She baked a *scantidoro* - and then took it to her parish Church as an offering for evening vespers. When I asked Mrs Marina why she was doing this - she replied "Christ speaks to my son and takes pity", as it is on this particular day it is believed that the Christ descends once again into the bowels of the earth this time as in Holy Saturday, but to keep company with the so called damned.

For mothers like Mrs Marina fearful that their dead children might inhabit this nether world because of their sins, despair of redemption is provided some hope- that He might take pity on them and relieve them of their eternal punishment. Christ as the God that Unshackles the soul from Death, the Resurrected Christ that even reaches out to the damned, and not the Christ of *Deo Satisfactio* of the heretical western Churches is the glory of Greek Orthodoxy and of Orthodoxy as a whole.

I haven't taken any theatre productions to Greece from the UK, but I did make contact with one of Greece's great directors of Greek tragedy Mr. [Name] who offered me to play Medea (whom I had already played at Theatro Technis London) at Theatro Petra in Petroupoli. However his assistant unfortunately no performance. I still have the telegram of the offer.

I also got in touch with Pandelis Voulgaris, the renowned film director of "Ta Petrina Chronia" and later of "The Brides" in which I had a crucial role made.

In the course of my ongoing discussions with Voulgaris regarding a project that I took to Channel 4 for funding and in which he said I could chair a part that I liked, Voulgaris asked me to find film funding for what was to be the last but unfinished film project of Elia Kazan, a personal friend of mine. The subject of the film was the immigration of the Kazan family from the beleaguered Greek minority communities under Turkish rule in Asia Minor to the USA where the Kazan family settled. I arranged a meeting between Elia Kazan and the London based film financier Frixos Constantini of the Grand Bretagne Hotel in Athens. What followed from this meeting is that Mr Constantini put Elia Kazan in touch with Martin Scorsese a personal friend of Constantini and who also runs the production company Cappa films. And so it was that these two giants of US cinema met for the first time.

It is also because of these meetings that Pandelis Voulgaris was able to make "The Brides". Elia Kazan was too old to get film insurance, so Scorsese brought to Voulgaris the film project "The Brides", and yet I have to this day never have had a thank you from him. So much appearance. This particular story has been included in my IMDB trivia section as well as on my entry on www.flixster.com, and www.Rottentomatoes.com.

And this is not the only time that I have stuck out my neck for a Greek film director. With Nikos Nikolaides I introduced him to Mr Constantini who undertook to send his XXX-rated movie "Singapore Sling" to two of the top film agents in the UK, Jenny Cassarotto and PDF who have now changed on account of a merger. Ms Cassarotto was indulgent, but the other agent was so shocked that he treated me as if I was peddling porn.

The things I've done for Greece!

HELLENISM.NET: Who - or what - would you say has had the biggest influence on deciding to become an actress? Were your parents supportive of your decision?

I inherited my actresses' genes from my mother, who had she lived in more enlightened times would have become either a great actress or a love of drama was aroused not only by the films that I saw as a child at the local drive-in in Boksburg, but also by the drama classes at my school where as I have already told you I also became politically aware. So you might say that the two - my passion to act and my moral commitment to were inextricably linked.

I have already described my parents as good Orthodox conservative Greeks. They considered my becoming an actress a waste of my intellect and demeaning.

The media have always been rife with louche stories of affairs between easily available actresses and directors, producers etc. And probably more. For the I'm told that nowadays an affair with a director, casting director, is just part of social intercourse- this apparently is the attitude of the

today. In Greece the situation is even worse and can possibly be described as a veritable "bordelium". But my parents put their faith in my mo paid for my drama training. They probably considered my quest to become an actress as a kind of infatuation , an urge to show off that would that it was a way of diverting my inconvenient passions for political activity. How wrong they were about it just being a fling to show off!

At Cape Town drama school the training was conducted in an atmosphere of political awareness of what was happening around us. Most of the productions had a political edge. As an actress you were prompted to want to participate in work that had existential and political importance.

So it was not surprising that when I came to London I worked for a Marxist Greek Cypriot theatre company Theatro Technis in North London, where prejudice against immigrants, the poor, the illiterate were dramatised , and more urgently the exploration of the war crime that constituted the by the Turkish military of CYPRUS, and for which the USA (especially the diabolical Kissinger) and the UK had little concern , as the president of Orthodox Archbishop Makarios, who had the reputation of being a bit of a red.

This was a theatre company that practiced political theatre in its purest form! I found myself performing a Greek Cypriot peasant woman driven from the North of Cyprus and expressing her grief at the loss of her home in front of an audience that included refugees who had suffered the same managed to escape to London. The tears just flowed naturally.

It was also at this theatre that I tackled the Mount Everest of acting parts - MEDEA by Euripides, and which I performed to great review performance that put me on the London map as an actress. The whole play was interpreted politically.

MEDEA represented the unwanted and disposable OTHER in the comfortable and cozy Greek society that the feckless Jason brings her to. She is discarded. I played her as a volcanic barefooted Anna Magnani.

Other great parts in politicized Greek tragedies followed- one of them included IO in "PROMETHEUS BOUND" the profoundest drama ever written concerned, and set in military Junta Greece of the 1970s .

Theatro Technis however was a company committed to a political theatre using basically Cypriot actors in the UK to bring about change in community and political change in Cyprus itself. It was not the theatre that crossed racial or cultural barriers, that was capable of performing dramas concerned with the great moral dilemmas that confront a human being , with actors and actresses from different race groups , with characters from any nationality which was my ultimate aim.

HELLENISM.NET: Do you feel that your Greek heritage has shaped your character and influenced your performances?

Where does one begin to express what I consider to be my Greek heritage and the awe that I feel for its magnificence!

The demand for excellence by my parents - a call to the "ariston" that goes back to the Golden age of Pericles! The Call to "Philotimo" that is the great Greek culture! The certitude of my manner and belief in myself because I know that "Eimaste pedia to Platona" as Garbi's song goes, that land that gave the western world its intellectual oxygen and its aesthetics. Would the British Museum be the world class museum if it did not display the Parthenon Marbles?

My inheritance of the 300 Spartans, resisting occupation from the East. My inheritance of Alexandros the Great, student of the great Aristotle, unifier of tribes , creator of the Hellenistic Empire and promulgator of our great Greek heritage . One point that historians forget to mention is that Alexander the Great's booty of his conquests, not to Persia, but to Athens - the capital and centre of Hellas

To continue about my Greek heritage: the gift of Orthodoxia : The call by the Christ not to be just good moral and ethical beings - which is what the Churches stop- but to go beyond that , to be 'theanthropic' - to reflect the generosity and magnificence and beauty of the Christ.

The gift of Byzantine doxology. As the great Sir John Taverner says:

"The music of the Byzantine Church is not something better or more amazing than something else, but rather beyond everything else that is known; something before all ages and unmoved is coming to birth, something new, and yet already known, but heard for the first time, to hear us, with all the integrity, and with all the humility of our calling as sacred beings".

The call to resist "Ottomisation" achieved by the enslaved Greek nation for 400 years and with little support from other European nations Russian cousins and the beautiful outcast Byron. The British were positively supporting our Ottoman enslavement and even selling our consecutive Sultanates.

I think that if I go to Constantinopoulis and see Agia Sophia desecrated by some exhibition of tiles or a fashion show , as I've heard has happened neglected shambles of the greatest mural of Christianity- The Resurrected Christ trampling on Death - I think I will commit the illegal!

The call of resistance to the Nazis - when all mainland Europe had succumbed, it was only Greece - my Antigone - who resisted and was starved

The everyday resistance by Greece and the Greeks to the illegal invasions by Turkish planes on our airspace. What we have now is a Neo-Ott Erdogan and Davidoglou.

The heritage of depth of the my Greek soul which allows me to play Medea, Lady Macbeth, Io in Prometheus Bound, Miss Julie, Emma in El intensity and thrust that surprises the Anglos. The great theatre critic Ken Tynan has pointed out why audiences are enthralled by great play: with great parts, and where better than in Greek drama do you find great parts. These great parts arouse the "envy" of the audience who "feel allowed to attend at the doing of such large catastrophic things.. that the emotions being evoked before them are of a quality enviably finer than have shared, far less experienced." (Tynan)

So of course this gift of my Greek inheritance and blood that courses through my veins has shaped not only my character but not to be afraid even if it is going to damage my career (something which I have already done several times) , influenced what I consider to be of value and TV, and in the way I approach my parts .

In fact, I personally being the Greek that I am, don't think that I would wish to handle or be capable of acting any of the many mundane TV parts everyday - pub events, the sexual shenanigans of the various classes, tea-parties, Nicky Gervais' office explorations . What is the existential in Does one really want to commit one's soul, and being to incarnating this!?

HELLENISM.NET: I read in one of your interviews that you are the founder of the Internationalist Theatre of London. What is the Internationalist Theatre of London?

Having arrived from racist torn South Africa to start as an actress in London, apart from working in the Greek Cypriot Theatre in North London familiar territory, I found a British theatre generally xenophobic at the time, resistant to casting actors of other nationalities and cultures in class

Internationalist Theatre was created to break racial and cultural barriers, perform great classical plays as well more contemporary ones that address and situations that cut across regional, national, racial and sexist barriers performed by a company of actors and actresses from all nationalities demonstration of the harmonious collaboration of different peoples towards a common aesthetic, social and moral goal.

My first tentative efforts in creating my theatre company was mounting John Ford's "Tis Pity She's a Whore". I asked people for money for my part as I found myself canvassing for another cause. This production was not the totally multi-racial cast that I had hoped for , but did consist of a variety of cultures and differing accents, and also achieved a very high level of production value and rave reviews. It also provided the springboard for the talented director/ designer couple Declan Donnellan and Nicolas Ormerod , who went on to create the now world famous Cheek by Jowl company

Empowered by my ability as a producer by this success I could now begin to create the theatre that would really break the taboos on mono-racial and mono cultural casting - that was the usual formula of performance for the classical plays- the plays that are eternal in their message to man- and

It was at this time that I approached the great Athol Fugard to be a patron of my new company. Other patrons included the Head of the National Theatre association. The play chosen to incarnate this new multi-racial and multi-accented presentation of a great classic - was Jean Genet's THE BALCONY choice, as the play is set in a Paris that is in turmoil with rioting, just as London at this point of time was being torched during the Brixton riots the racial tensions that had been simmering for some time as a result of the SAS laws, thwarted potentials etc etc . The Balcony explored the repressive social realities to the opiate and sexual palliatives provided by the HOUSE of ILLUSION.

Set in Paris in the 1930's it fitted the mold perfectly as The Stage's critic pointed out . I insisted on the casting of a Afro-Caribbean actress to play Irma the Madam of the Brothel, Americans, French, German , Indian , mixed race actors who could have easily have lived in the demi-monde of Paris was a great success and the door started opening.

Black actors saw a lead role in a great European classic played by a fellow black actress in a part initially written by Genet for a Caucasian actress. Genet's text might be considered as even more difficult than Shakespeare, or Greek tragedy. I , too benefited from playing Carmen , as one of the first to come to see the Balcony was the great film director, Nicolas Roeg , who then cast me in his film of Roald Dahl's THE WITCHES.

EL CAMPO - Internationalist Theatre's next play was written by the Argentinian playwright Griselda Gambaro , who had been hounded out of

Argentina by the Junta and was now living in Spain, opened on the day That Writers International were remembering the writers banned in their country. As Micheline Wandor previewed "Internationalist theatre was pursuing a policy of multi-national and multi-racial casting". An American, A South African and a UK black actor.

EL CAMPO could have easily been a dramatisation of the degradation of what happened to the people arrested by the SA Nationalist Security Service detained without trial in a SA prison, and not only the degradation of a Jewish musician in a Nazi prison camp, or on a parallel level an actor degraded by the junta. A performance was seen by Ken Livingstone, ex-mayor of London, but then part of the Greater London Council's Internationalist Theatre was for the first time granted public funds for its following production, and in due course became a registered charity. I was offered a part in a Lindsay Anderson film, but had to decline due to conflicting time schedules.

The production received stunning reviews, which included an interview with the Spanish language BBC Latin American Service. People came to see great political theatre that crossed countries, cultural barriers and had a multi-racial cast.

I am not going through the whole history of Internationalist Theatre, but pinpointing the seminal moments of its development. Its first performance was in September 1981 and the company continued into the 90's.

The ground breaking production of the company, which was basically run by one person, me, from a bedsit in St John's Wood and required 18 months, and the point at which the cross cultural and multi-racial casting began to bite, was the production of Brecht's great anti-war play - Mother Courage. The part of the Pastor was played by the well known Pakistani actor Renu Setna. Just one comment/question in the review by the then free-lance writer, Malcolm Hay (later to become a full member of TIME OUT for the next 20 years) jolted us into the consciousness that we were making history.

The comment in question went something like: "why is a Pakistani actor (Renu Setna) playing the role of the Pastor?" Audience members were used to productions of classical plays like Mother Courage with Caucasian actors only. I went to the Drama Editor of TIME OUT, Anna McFerran and I asked her to remove this review from TIME OUT for the rest of the run of the play, as we found it offensive, and racist.

Another instance that the establishment was riled, is the reaction of a leading casting director Irene Lamb in a telephone conversation with me named Joe Figg: "WHY IS SHE (that is me) DOING THIS? The word spread around. I went for a TV audition and the director commented that he thought this tiny actress had organised a production of Mother Courage which was making waves. And I replied "That's me". The casting clichés had been broken.

Actors are People, and it is their talent that counts. Today this type of casting is common place, BUT IT HAD TO BE FOUGHT FOR.

Furthermore Internationalist Theatre's MOTHER COURAGE production could not be dismissed as some amateur dramatics as it was being directed by Peter Stevenson, and a director whom the great John Barton - a stalwart of the RSC - often asked to be his collaborator on many productions. The attack on casting clichés as manifested in the casting of "Mother Courage" were bearing concrete results. John Penrose an agent of London Music saw my Yvette in "Mother Courage" offered me the part of Lady MacDuff for a main stream theatre production of "Macbeth" for a UK wide tour. I played Lady Macbeth in a gripping production staged in the Tramshed at Woolwich, and wasn't keen to tour.

In another instance a main stream repertory company based in Leicester offered me "Sweeney Todd" but I turned this down on account of a production on the fringe. MISS JULIE was not a multi-racial production, but a puncturing of Ethnic casting clichés.

Both in the UK and the USA actors from ethnic Caucasian minorities had changed their Jewish, Italian, Greek, Eastern European surnames to fit the casting mold. Kirk Douglas, Tony Curtis, Clara Bow, Merle Oberon, Jennifer Anniston who has a Greek father, the list goes on and on - except Barbara Streisand, who refused to also have the surgery.

It took Elia Kazan, Coppola, Scorsese to use Italian-American actors and bring them into the USA mainstream. And then we had the Afro-American Denzel Washington, Halle Berry - the surnames sound changed but it is a revolution. In the UK the renowned Greek/UK stage actress Katerina changed her name to Kathryn Hunter so that her surname did not obstruct her getting intelligent parts and not being asked to play an ethnic cliché.

Well my surname was Rockas, and Rockas it had remained. Some people thought it was Spanish, or French? Well it was unheard of that a successful ethnic actress of Greek temperament (though born in SA) would ever have the audacity to play the aristocratic Miss Julie. Not beautiful or tall - the point of puncturing the expected clichés is that my Miss Julie was going to explore the depths of inner turmoil that a confused upbringing had created in Julie by being brought up as a man by her militaristic father and basically had been much neglected. Her burgeoning sexuality is deeply touched.

Jean and brought out the woman in her.

The communist newspaper Morning Star's reviewer was "sussed" enough to perceive the intention of my performance and its theatrical disregarded my shortness etc. And for the Stage it proved to be one of the best productions of Miss Julie ever seen in London. Michael Meyer translator of Strindberg's Miss Julie also came and enthused. Greek Titanic passions had created a "Walpurgis Nacht" of moving proportions.

ENEMIES by Maxim Gorky too had great social and political resonance. When I submitted the play to the director/manager of the theatre venue she was so bowled over that she insisted that my company could not present it unless she directed it, and it was a co-production.

The timing of this performance proved as prophetic as that of THE BALCONY. ENEMIES explored the simmering revolt of the suppressed exiled Russian surfs against their land owning masters, and the inaction of the elites to do anything about it. In the UK the miners were fighting again and to save their mines against closure.

I took the political importance one step further - I invited the London cultural attache of the then Soviet Union of Russia to the performance. And they came. And they were just people like ourselves, and not THE OTHER that had been drummed into us as the great menace. This was an Internationalist Theatre style, in fact a la Angelique Rockas style as I had not told anyone about it in advance.

Again this production earned great reviews and played to packed houses. The racial barriers had started crumbling, the casting practices had cracked the political walls! A moral victory!

The reason the Internationalist Theatre productions demanded attention was that the directors who had already worked at top theatres like the Royal Shakespeare Company had agreed to take the risk of directing classical plays with multi-racial casts, that the performance was standard, and furthermore that many prominent members of the arts establishment - Lindsay Anderson, Cameron MacKintosh, John Barton, and great casting director Mary Selway, Stephen Berkoff, Nicolas Roeg, came to see performances by Internationalist Theatre.

The seriousness with which the productions were presented encouraged actors of non anglo-saxon non caucasian origin to take heart, be bold, to present themselves as artists first, as persons with talent, and only secondarily as actors coming from a specific ethnic group, and specifying away the cliched perception of themselves.

HELLENISM.NET: From what I understand you're mostly a theatre actress. Have you done any movies? Are you interested in making more?

As an actress I decided that I was not going to accept being cast in token ethnic roles in film or on TV, nor act any parts that I considered a portrayal of a non British character. To illustrate this point; after seeing me perform Tatiana in Gorky's "Enemies" the well known TV director, and Chris Menaul offered me the role of the main Russian air hostess in a Malcolm Bradbury BBC TV series. He was taken aback when I turned that I didn't have any TV credits. I gave some excuse 'that I thought the part vulgar' but the real reason was that Bradbury had portrayed the Russian what I considered in a cliched demeaning way and involved a little Russia bashing. I have recently sent him the real explanation via his agent.

I have made a point in my career to try and make contact with the film directors whose work I admire. These have included Angelopoulos and Greece, Costas Gavras in France, Michelangelo Antonioni, Francesco Rossi, and Lina Wertmüller in Italy.

In my meeting with Theo Angelopoulos we discussed a role in his film about Cyprus, "Green Line" but it never got off the ground.

Again for his "Ulysses Gaze" he saw me - but his casting remit seems to be restricted to the demands of his co-producers - that a certain number come from this and that country. His first question was "Eisai edo tora?" "are you now resident in Greece? And at the time I wasn't, so for co-prod I couldn't be considered eligible for the part.. And for a second time nothing happened.

What I have done in Greece is played the part of the actress Nereida in "Oh Baylon!" A film by Costas Ferris, Berlin Silver Bear Award winner. adaptation of "The Bacchae".

And the great comedic film director Thodoros Marangos, multi-Award winner and creator of the well known film "Mathe Paedi mou Gramma" specially for me, Ms Ortki in his 12 part ERT Television series "Emmones Idees" - a sharp satire on consumerism and how advertisers call the cards. As a Greek actress proud of my language, I had wanted to act in Greece in the Greek language and I achieved this.

In Italy the legendary Michelangelo Antonioni agreed to see me in his apartment on Via Tiberio. Antonioni was half paralyzed at the time but we half English and pigeon Italian. I think it was his wife that didn't consider me glamorous enough! Lina Wertmüller also agreed to see me in

located in Piazza Principessa Clothilde. Francesco Rossi dropped in at my hotel, The Garibaldi and we had a brief chat.

In the UK the great casting director Mary Selway put me up for "Outland" on account of the letter of Recommendation that the great South A producer Coubus Rousseau had given me. I was cast as Maintenance Woman by Peter Hyams in a scene opposite Sean Connery himself who and also gave me my first tip about film acting.

I invited the great Lindsay Anderson to several of my productions. When he was doing Britannia Hospital I was offered the part of a patient after in "Tis Pity" - but the timing collided with a performance of "El Campo"

Derek Jarman, a very kind and approachable person took me to a screening of "The Tempest" and after seeing a reel of mine offered me a part in a film about Zeerbrugge disaster called "The Raft of Medusa" after the Gericault painting! No funding! Then again a part in his musical "Pansy" singing tape! I learned something from that great man. He told me that I should be bold and go for the great directors, that the only thing you need is Imagination. And Jarman had that in buckets full - he created beauty and depth out of very simple means.

As I have previously stated Nicholas Roeg cast me in "The Witches" after seeing me as Carmen in "The Balcony". In another instance a Latvian filmmaker had obtained funding from the Austrain film commission after seeing my reel wrote a part for me especially in this project - but I found the script referred him to my Italian agent for alternative suggestions.

In the UK I have turned down many token Greek, Cypriot Greek, and Latin American roles in TV productions.. Casting directors seem to consider credits to your resume of what I consider cough and spit ethnic characters is something of an achievement. Obviously I don't.

I have done real acting of a three dimensional powerful woman's role, of great emotional depth and intelligence, technically difficult, a mammoth portrayal of Ms Ortiki in "Emmones Idees", which would cover at least 15 credits of ethnic UK TV appearances or credits as they could not furthermore refused to participate in Greek Cypriot Community video films on account of their suspect quality.

Right now I want to participate in Gavras' latest film "Le Capitalisme" and I'm working on it.

HELLENISM.NET: What are your thoughts about the current situation in Greece?

The Greek people have become exiles in their country and are alienated from their identity metaphorically speaking! They have to find their way to control of their land.

As Nikos Konstandaras in Kathimerini has put it "How could a people that questions everything(a quality that helped it reach great heights) surrender completely to a political, economic and media elite that looted the country while flattering us with fairy tales regarding our unique culture and our silence with borrowed prosperity?"

Yesterday the 17th September 2011 respected economists on the BBC News website openly stated that the Greek economic tragedy at this late stage is a sad side show and that what Merkel and Sarkozy were really trying to do is prevent contagion to the rest of Europe. The duo patronizingly assume they would not Force Greece out of Europe. The reality is that they have already relegated ELLAS to the dust heap!

And that Machiaevell and "liberal progressive" as Prof Yiannaras would describe him, Venizelos, prompted by political ambition, is quite preying on the fabric of Greek society for the sake of a perceived meretricious distinction of Greece remaining in Europe and NOT DEFAULTED!. He has imposed on the downtrodden Greek Laos retrospective taxes and measures that as Simon Heiffer, a well known UK journalist proclaimed on 1 night Question Time- also the 17th September 2011- would in another country cause revolution!!!!!! I would further claim that these retrospective taxes are illegal and that some prominent lawyer like Lycouretzos should take this matter up at the International Court of Justice.

Historically default is not something alien to the Greek polity. The first Greek default in history occurred as early as 400 BC. After the 1812 Ottoman slavery the government of Greece had to borrow huge sums to try and create a functioning administration on national and local level which never defrayed. Then again, after WWII Greece was bankrupt. Again the country had to borrow heavily to try and stand on her feet! This debt has added to past debts, and then we have the debt that each successive corrupt Greek power elite borrows in order to pay off the minions that support them. refer to Konstandaras: 'the fatal alliance between politicians who gave the people everything they wanted in return for votes, and the people who promised them the impossible, as if no one ever expected the bill to arrive'.

Simitis and co. might have pushed for inclusion of Greece in the Eurozone as a buttress against that eternal foe of the Greek _TURKEY! Erdogan

still think of themselves as Ottomans. Someone should cure them of their hubris and their delusions!

Greece has been forced by the Turks, who always resort to *Casus Belli* if they don't get what they want, to protect herself by spending vast sums on armaments! That is why the Greek taxpayer sees no social benefits for his high taxes - Greece has been in a perpetual state of war with this ugly East!

But the means that Simitis and co. resorted to bring about Greece's entry into the Eurozone constitutes FRAUD. Cooking the financial records of Goldman Sachs to find loopholes to hide the real debt of the country to comply with the EE's conditions for Euro entry resulted in Greece digging

The entry of Greece into the Eurozone also presented the Greek people with the Memphistophelean temptation of the false glamour of consumerist society- easy credit cards, bank loans. The capitalist machine of promoting the need for consumption and the creation of false needs went into overdrive.

The corrupt media and the advertisers promoted the aspiration of what you needed to buy and possess to lead the "European lifestyle". I remember when a presenter on a morning TV show suggested as a suitable present for Christmas- a "Foularaki" for E50. Everyone knows that the wage of the Greek citizen was and is no more than E1500 per month. So he/she can hardly afford a E50 present for various friends etc. The Greeks were positively encouraged to take out loans, something akin to the USA subprime market loans.

The Banks were totally obliging- because they had to behave as Europeans! And then of course as happened in all countries that entered the Eurozone, everyday necessities like food, cleaning agents, washing powder, etc etc sky rocketed. And what is the most disgusting thing of all is that the State didn't create a mechanism to control this, e.g a consumer watchdog to curb the greed of the food manufacturers, the food distributors etc.

One suspects that these are the cartels that sustain the political elites - hence the lack of enthusiasm to curb them, and damn the suffering poor

This symbiotic relationship between the financial, manufacturing and shipping elites, on the one side and the political elites on the other, has existed since the end of the ill-fated Civil war, when the Great Powers once again, as they had done after the overthrow of Ottoman Turkey and installed a Prince to rule the Greeks, ensured that a government favourable to the Anglo-American interests was in place. Kissinger's taming of the Greek had a long history.

The current government are Americanakia, Davos boys, they ask Soros and Goldman Sachs how to manage Greece, and as "liberal progressive" foreign intellectual as long as he/she is not Greek about how to solve Greece's problems. I remember that during the Simitis administration, when Marie Antoinette Angelopoulou was given free reign during the Olympic Games to indulge all her fantasies and which costs can also be covered by bankrupted poor Greece.

I read in Kathimerini that when the department of Social Security wanted to commission a study on possible solutions in this sector, they enlisted not from Greek Universities or Institutes but from some UK organization at the cost of E120,000.00. What an insult to their own Greek academics!

The entry in Europe and its large resources of funds to improve Greece's transport infrastructure, schooling, hospitals, etc was seen as an opportunity for the same power elites to enrich themselves. WHERE IS THE MISSING MONEY?

But no one can be held accountable as they had conveniently voted in a law that made them Immune from Prosecution? Where is the university where is the respect for every Greek citizen who needs to believe that there is the possibility of justice? Where is DEMOCRACY? Where is the power for his betrayal of Greece by giving him the black stone of exile as in ancient Athens????

I get the impression that the politicians have always disregarded the interest of the ordinary Greek person - in fact they do not respect him /her but are concerned with the impression that they make on their overseas counterparts, for their future careers. When were the interests of Greece itself protected?

Why then should the everyday Greek pay taxes to a government manned by politicians who are exempt from accountability, are in cahoots with the elites who don't pay taxes, are in cahoots with the DEMOSIO for their support, in cahoots with media moguls and with journalists who promote and possibly in cahoots with Europe to dilute Greek Orthodoxy, and Greek culture. Another really painful thing is the realization that the Greek rulers are damn about Greece.

A Financial Times journalist investigating the level of tax evasion that the wealthy Greeks have now become famous for, went to a party that is held at the lux Astir Palace Hotel by Greece's shipping magnates. He asked them about their tax arrangements. They unashamedly disclosed that the

end of the Civil War made a pact with the then Greek governments that they would pay no tax in return for keeping their offices located in Greece. A journalist asked them what they would do, if the Greek government asked them to pay taxes- they non-chalantly answered transfer their office to Panama etc. They love living in the beauty of Greece, in seaside villas costing more than £50,000,000, to enjoy themselves in its vibrant life and marrying in Greece's beautiful Churches, but not pay taxes to help their country.

When Prof Kitto wrote his book on "The Greeks" one of the reasons that he provided for the success of 5th century Athens is that "THE GREEKS, L

Where is this love of Athens, love of Greece by Greece's rich, and one might extend this to the professional classes who were found to be declaring 10,000 Euros a year when they were in fact earning more than 100,000 Euros.

They are all traitors!!! Including the Greeks who have transferred wealth to London and are looking according to Savills and Hamptons International agents for houses in Mayfair and Belgravia area for around 5,000,000 pounds. Have these people paid their taxes on this income? Little Venice, a Maida Vale in London has now been renamed Little Greece.

On the other side the DEMOSIO is also guilty of betraying Greece. The various unions are used to the Greek State paying vast sums of money to them for their benefits and unnecessary perks. And of course they don't expect to pay taxes for this?

HELLENISM.NET: What do you think needs to change in order for Greece to turn things around?

The Greeks must default, overthrow their rulers, and return to the drachma. DEFAULT IS INEVITABLE VENIZELOS!!! Get off the people's back!

Satyajit Das author of "Extreme Money: The Masters of the Universe and the Cult of Risk" points out in relation to Greece 'that career politicians see no benefit in advocating a complex and messy default and restructuring. But the longer the time taken over the process, the greater the likelihood unless the debt burden is reduced early, high servicing costs will raise the level of the write-off needed to restore solvency'.

Anthony Hilton in the Evening Standard of July 14th 2011 in his article "The Way out of this Crisis that Europe can't face" explains that "for the Greeks to turn themselves into an economically competitive position and stimulate growth, the solution proposed by the new economic masters of Greece requires a contraction of living standards by more than 25%, and that is nowhere near out of the woods and this on top of paying back the electorates will not stand for this!!! Like Das. Hilton proposes that the only solution is for Greece to leave the Euro!

But this is where our awareness of the spiritual and cultural depths and resources provided by our HERITAGE that will help us along and pull us out of the mire.

Please talented and brilliant young people of Greece do not emigrate - stay in Greece and save her. Introduce new laws that will make politicians accountable.

What the Greeks have to realize is that even after paying these additional taxes that Venizelos is proposing, Greece will still have the albatross of debt weighing her and her people down. The current power elite is playing for time!

Stay in Greece and save her. Introduce new laws that will make any politicians accountable. Introduce a new ethos of social consciousness based on Aristotle's Nicomachian Ethics and promote the ethos of the Good citizen. Explore the oil and gold reserves located in Greece for the benefit of the people, learn to share the goods of the land with everyone.

Our young are our only hope for the future of a renewed and Resurrected Greece.

And the Orthodox Church? What has the role of the Orthodox Church - the ontological support of the Greek nation- been in all of this! Nothing like the Anglican Church in the UK which might not have the profound sacramentality and theological depth of the Orthodox Church, but they have not criticized their successive UK governments for the economic injustices, the high cost of living, the sin of being excessively wealthy, the sin of being corrupt. When has an Orthodox prelate come out openly and criticized the dynastic families that have divided political power between themselves, the Greek media for sucking up to the wealthy families whom they hold up as role models, the spiritual sterility of many of the imported models?

Time to recreate and cast yourselves in a constructive role Orthodox Church and give away some of your great riches to the many Greeks who are impoverished as a result of this economic tragedy.

HELLENISM.NET: Angelique, it was a great honour to have the chance to ask you all these questions. We wish you every success in the future.